



ANNUAL REPORT
NOVA SCOTIA DISABLED PERSONS
COMMISSION

1998-99

NOVEMBER, 1999

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to present this, the 1998-99 Annual Report of the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those Commission members whose term of appointment ended this past year. In particular I would extend thanks to both Ann Power (Department of Education and Culture) and Peter Lawton (Department of Health) for their excellent participation over the past two years.

As you will note in review of the mandate of the Disabled Persons Commission, the Commission is comprised of both representatives of the disability community and key Provincial Government departments. In 1998-99 a new slate of members were appointed to the Commission. The new members include:

Ralph Ferguson

Ralph joined the Commission as a community representative from Pictou County and brings a wealth of personal and professional understanding and experience on disability issues. Currently Ralph is the chair of the "Let Abilities Work" initiative in Pictou County and is heavily involved in his community.

Scott Hemming

Scott brings a wealth of understanding and personal experience on disability concerns particularly as they relate to persons with hepatitis C. Scott has experience in the area of employment of persons with disabilities and is currently active as a job developer, working on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Shaun Whittleton

Shaun joins the Commission representing the Department of Education and Culture. He is the Manager of the Rehabilitation Training Unit and has responsibility for the delivery of the EAPD responsibilities under the Department of Education and Culture.

Brian Wilbur

Brian is Director of Drug Dependency, Strategic Health Services Branch, and has responsibility for the EAPD services under the Department of Health.

I would like to thank all Commission members and friends of the Commission who have worked collaboratively towards our goal of full inclusion for persons with disabilities. I would also like to thank Commission staff for their efforts and commitment over the past year. Your work is truly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Nita Irvine, Chair

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission was established by the Disabled Persons Commission Act of 1989. The Commission's mandate is to advise Government and the general public on the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia.

The Commission is comprised of 12 members the majority of whom must be persons with disabilities. Five of the Commission members represent senior officials from Government Departments that have a significant stake in the delivery of services to persons with disabilities.

The Chair is elected by the members of the Commission and must be a community representative.

The Commission reports to the Minister of Community Services who is the Minister responsible for reporting on persons with disabilities to Cabinet. As well there is a Coordinating Committee of Ministers chaired by the Minister of Community Services and comprised of ministries that have a significant stake in disability matters. Currently the following ministries sit on the Coordinating Committee of Ministers:

Minister of Community Services
Minister of Health
Minister of Education
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
Minister of Labour
Minister of Transportation and Public Works

This report provides an overview of the issues and initiatives that were engaged by the Commission in the 1998-99 fiscal year.

In keeping with it's mandate to advise government on the needs and abilities of Nova Scotians with disabilities, the Commission reviews and publishes a Statistical Handbook on disability. Some highlights in this year's Annual Report include:

- There were 4,184,685 Canadians reporting a disability in 1991. This represents 15.5% of the Canadian population.
- There were 189,455 Nova Scotians reported having a disability in 1991; this represented 21.3% of the Nova Scotia population.

- The disability rate for Nova Scotia in 1991 was higher than for any other province in Canada, and almost 6% higher than the national average.
- The disability rate in Nova Scotia was 4.4% higher than the rate reported in 1986.
- Of those reporting disabilities in Nova Scotia in 1991, 52.6% were female and 47.4% were male.
- In both 1986 and 1991, the disability rate in Nova Scotia has increased consistently with age. In 1991, the disability rate was more than 58% for individuals over 65 years of age.

In order to investigate why Nova Scotia has the highest disability rate in Canada, the Disabled Persons Commission in conjunction with the Department of Health has been working on a Statistical Research Project investigating the reasons/causes for the high incidence of disability in Nova Scotia.

Considering the high rate of disability in Nova Scotia and the expected increase in the rate of disability during the next decade, an understanding of the causes and occurrences of disability in Nova Scotia will be essential in developing programs and policies for persons with disabilities.

As a result of this investigation and in recognition that the Federal government has announced work will commence on designing a Health and Activity Limitation Survey in conjunction with the 2001 Canadian Census, the Commission forwarded recommendations to both the Nova Scotia and Federal governments concerning this matter.

The Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission has been heavily engaged in discussions concerning the planning and implementation of the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Agreement that has replaced the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Initiative. A synopsis of community consultations and the establishment of an Interim Reference Committee are provided in this report.

The Commission convened a committee comprised of representatives from Government and the deaf community to develop recommendations and a policy for Government concerning the provision of sign language interpreter services. Attention to this issue was heightened as a result of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which requires all government service providers to ensure

that persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing benefit equally from services offered to the general public and to make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services.

The Commission completed and tabled a final report on Interpreter Services in Nova Scotia in 1998 that resulted in the adoption of a provincial policy entitled: "Sign Language Interpreter Services Policy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians" that came into effect on January 1, 1999. An overview of this policy is provided in the Annual Report.

An overview of the work of the Inclusive Transportation Steering Committee is provided. This Steering Committee, following a presentation to the Deputy Ministers of Housing and Municipal Affairs, Community Services and Transportation and Public Works was given direction to proceed with an Inclusive Transportation Pilot Project. A Project Co-ordinator was engaged on February 1st, 1999 and the program was launched in early March, 1999.

Concurrent with the release of the discussion paper on Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative "Rebuilding the System", the Disabled Persons Commission was asked for specific advice by the Minister of Community Services, who is also the Minister Responsible for the Disabled Persons Commission.

Specifically, the Commission was asked how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities in a restructured social assistance delivery system. The specific issue of whether social assistance/income support services for persons with disabilities should be included in a single piece of legislation or whether there should be a separate legislative framework for these types of services to persons with disabilities.

Following discussion, consultation, and collaboration, the Commission prepared a report and presented their findings to the Minister of Community Services. The report and recommendations are included in this Annual Report.

The Department of Transportation and Public Works in partnership with the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission, the Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs, and the Department of Human Resources is developing a policy to address accessibility barriers within government owned and leased properties. An Accessible Policy Development Committee for Barrier Free Access to Government Owned and Leased Properties has been given the mandate to review current government policy, specifications and practices in regards to barrier free access. The Committee has the responsibility to develop policy recommendations for the Government of Nova

Scotia concerning the Province's responsibilities in ensuring appropriate and barrier free access to government owned or leased facilities. These recommendations will be practical and responsive to the access needs of all Nova Scotians, and will reflect the current fiscal capacity of the Province. The Committee is co-chaired by a representative of the Department of Transportation & Public Works and the Disabled Persons Commission.

In 1998-99 the Disabled Persons Commission reviewed a new concept in accessible housing "Visitability". A brief overview and background of this concept is provided in this annual report.

In the area of Assistive Technology the Commission reviewed the study "Developing an Assistive Technology Community Outreach Service Delivery Model for Nova Scotia" and supported it's recommendations. As well, the Commission reviewed the provision of assistive technology in the classroom and tabled recommendations to the Department of Education and Culture.

The Annual Report provides a summary of how the Commission engages in initiatives such as the Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society, Team Work Co-operative Ltd., Partnership for Access Awareness-Nova Scotia as examples of working collaboratively and in partnership with the community for the betterment of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia.

3. THE DISABLED PERSONS COMMISSION

3.1 BACKGROUND

The Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission was established under the authority of the Disabled Persons Commission Act in 1989. The Act provides a mechanism to ensure a framework exists, whereby Nova Scotians with disabilities can advise policy-makers and program developers on the needs of persons with disabilities. The Act provides a mechanism for persons with disabilities to become policy advisors on issues and concerns which directly affect their lives.

Purpose

The purpose of the Disabled Persons Commission Act is to:

- a. provide for the participation of persons with disabilities in the development of government policies and programs which directly relate to or affect persons with disabilities;
- b. ensure that the concerns of persons with disabilities will be promoted and considered by the government, especially in matters of policy and where concerns affect several departments of the government;
- c. ensure that the concerns of persons with disabilities, are conveyed to the proper department of government and are dealt with in an appropriate, effective and timely manner.

Objectives

The objectives of the Disabled Persons Commission are to:

- a. to assist and advise the Coordinating Committee of Ministers on the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities;
- b. make the general public aware of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities;
- c. make persons with disabilities and the general public aware of government programs that serve persons with disabilities;
- d. make the general public aware of what it can do to facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities into the social and economic mainstream of the community.

3.2 COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

The Disabled Persons Commission is primarily responsible to the Government of Nova Scotia, through the Coordinating Committee of Ministers. The Chairperson of this Coordinating Committee is the Minister responsible for reporting on disabled persons, the Minister of Community Services. Membership on the Coordinating Committee is comprised of Ministries that have a direct stake in provision of services for persons with disabilities.

The following Ministries are represented on the Coordinating Committee of Ministers:

Minister of Community Services
Minister of Health
Minister of Education and Culture
Minister of Transportation and Public Works
Minister of Labour
Minister of Housing & Municipal Affairs

3.3 COMMISSION MEMBERS

In 1998-99 the members of the Disabled Persons Commission were as follows:

Nita Irvine	Chair, Wolfville
Ted Morrison	Vice-Chair, Glace Bay
Craig MacKinnon	Halifax
Barb Welsford	Lunenburg
Frank O'Sullivan	Halifax
Scott Hemming	Halifax
Ralph Ferguson	Pictou
Shaun Whittleton	Department of Education and Culture
Craig Hinchey	Department of Community Services
Brian Wilbur	Department of Health
Crystal Taylor	Department of Human Resources
Aileen Waller-Hebb	Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs

4. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA

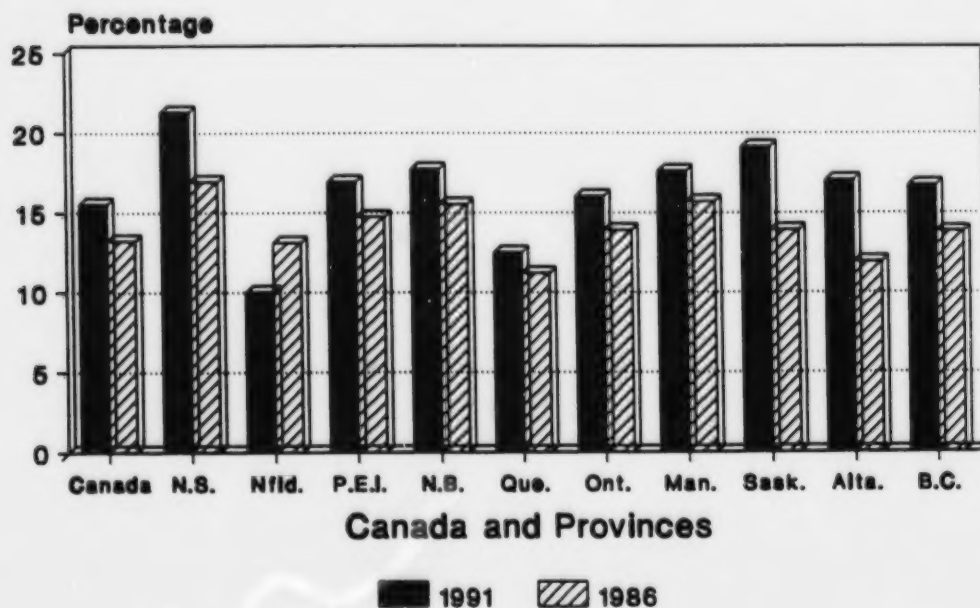
In keeping with its mandate to advise government on the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia, the Commission examines and reports on demographic information as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

For this purpose the Commission produces a Statistical Handbook of demographic information based on the most current information available from the Health and Activity Limitation Survey, Statistics Canada. This demographic information is used on a daily basis by government and organizations to assist in planning social service programs, employment services, transportation needs, special education services, and health care programs to name just a few.

Copies of this Statistical Handbook are available upon request from the Disabled Persons Commission. Also, some general demographic information follows:

4.1 General Demographic Information

Disability Rate for Canada and Provinces 1991 and 1986



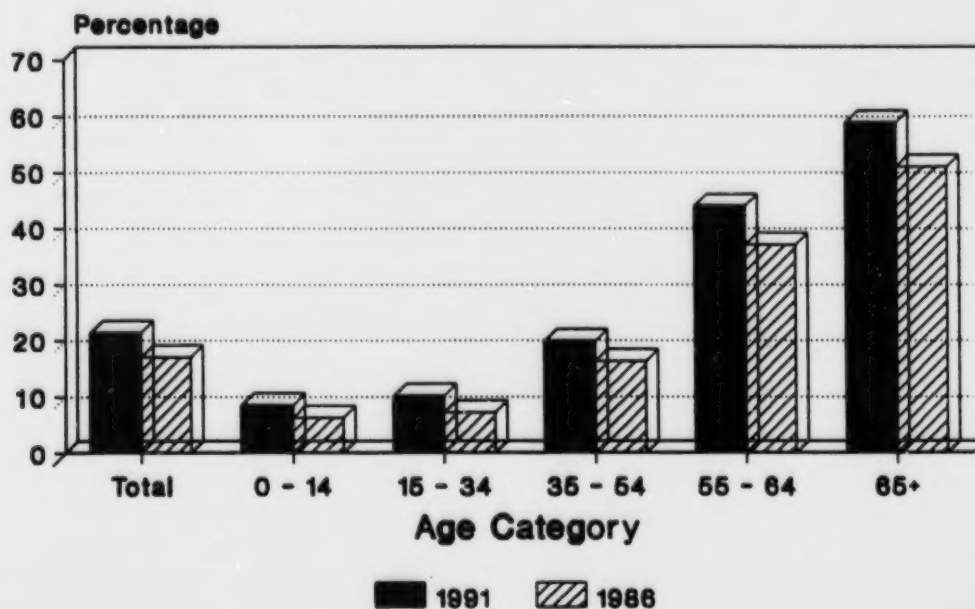
- There were 4,184,685 Canadians reporting a disability in 1991. This represents 15.5% of the Canadian population.

- 189,455 Nova Scotians reported having a disability in 1991; this represented 21.3% of the Nova Scotia population.
- The disability rate for Nova Scotia in 1991 was higher than for any other province in Canada, and almost 6% higher than the national average.
- The disability rate in Nova Scotia was 4.4% higher than the rate reported in 1986.

Disability Breakdown

- Of those reporting disabilities in Nova Scotia in 1991, 52.6% were female and 47.4% were male.
- In both 1986 and 1991, the disability rate in Nova Scotia has increased consistently with age. In 1991, the disability rate was more than 58% for individuals over 65 years of age.

Disability Rate by Age for Nova Scotia 1991 and 1986



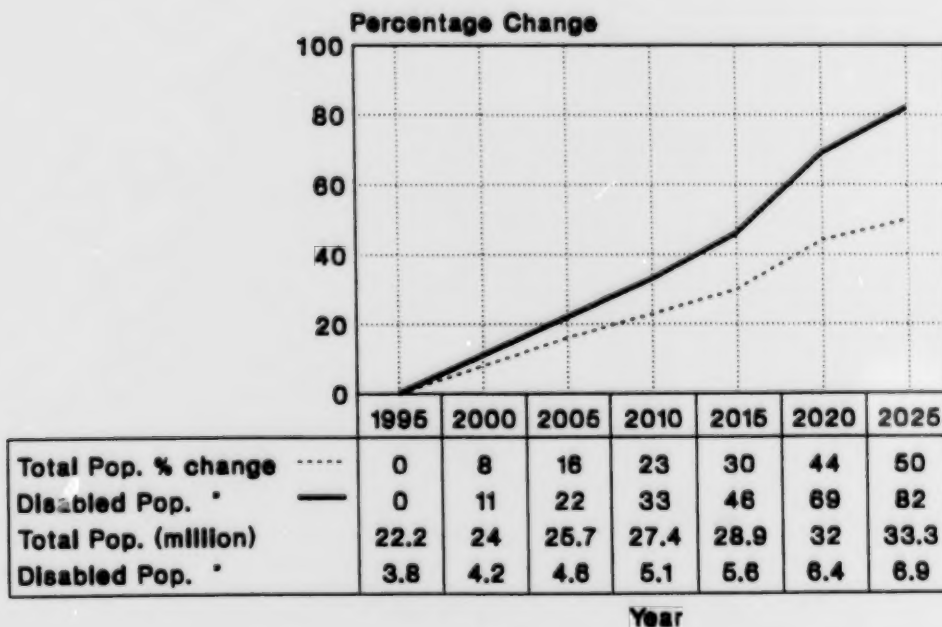
- There were 15,275 children between 0 to 14 years of age with a disability; 108,135 persons between 15 to 64 years of age; and 66,045 persons 65 years of age and over reporting a disability.

**Persons With Disabilities By Severity Level
Aged 15 Years And Over**

SEVERITY LEVEL	CANADA		NOVA SCOTIA	
	Number	%	Number	%
Mild	1,735,920	49.2	77,275	46.5
Moderate	1,160,590	32.8	59,810	36.0
Severity	636,580	18.0	29,105	17.5
Total	3,533,090	100	166,190	100

- More than 53 percent of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia have a moderate to severe level of disability.
- More than 17 percent of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia have a severe level of disability.

Disability Growth Rates for Canada 1995 to 2025



Projected Disability Rate

- According to Statistics Canada data, the number of adults with disabilities in Canada is expected to increase from 3.8 million in 1995, to 6.9 million in 2025. This represents an increase of 82% as compared to 50% for the general population between 1995 and 2025.
- Persons with disabilities requiring specialized transportation are expected to increase in Canada from 2.2 million in 1995, to 4.1 million in 2025, an increase of 89%.
- Persons with disabilities who are 65 years of age and over are expected to increase from 1.38 million in 1995 (accounting for 36% of all persons with disabilities) to 3.3 million in 2025 (accounting for 47.8% of all persons with disabilities).

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

At present, the Health and Activities Limitation Survey is the only reliable source of demographic information on persons with disabilities in Canada. The need for the information that is provided by this survey cannot be over estimated for Nova Scotia.

As noted in Section 4.1 and according to the most current Health and Activities Limitation Survey in 1991, 21.3 percent of the Nova Scotia population has a disability. In addition, it has been estimated by Statistics Canada that this number will grow to approximately 32 percent of the Canadian population by the year 2020.

With such a large and growing number of persons with disabilities, access to information about the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities is essential for both Federal and Provincial Governments and disability related organizations in developing policies and programs for persons with disabilities.

Current Initiatives

The most recent information available from Statistics Canada indicates that the disability rate in Nova Scotia is more than 5.8 percent higher than the disability rate for Canada at 15.5 Percent. In addition, these findings have been consistent over time as Nova Scotia also had the highest disability rate in Canada in 1986 at 16.9 percent.

In order to investigate why Nova Scotia has the highest disability rate in Canada, the Disabled Persons Commission in conjunction with the Department of Health has been working on a statistical research project investigating the reasons/causes for the high incidence of disability in Nova Scotia.

Although Statistics Canada has collected a considerable amount of information on persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia and Canada, no attempt had been made prior to this project to look at the possible causes for regional differences in the rate of disability.

For this purpose, consultation meetings between the Disabled Persons Commission and Statistics Canada were carried out in order to investigate possible parameters in the 1991 Health and Activities Limitation Survey data base which may provide some insights into the high rate of disability in Nova Scotia.

The results of this investigation are available from the Disabled Persons Commission.

Considering the high rate of disability in Nova Scotia and the expected increase in the rate of disability during the next decade, an understanding of the causes and occurrences of disability in Nova Scotia would be essential in developing programs and policies for persons with disabilities.

Recommendations/issues

As a result of this investigation and in recognition that the Federal government has announced work will commence on designing a Health and Activity Limitation Survey in conjunction with the 2001 Canadian census the following recommendations are being forwarded to both the Nova Scotia and Federal Governments.

Considering the results of the study, and the need for current statistical information on persons with disabilities it is recommended that:

- The Provincial Government and Statistics Canada work together to ensure that the Health and Activities Limitation Survey be carried out in the year 2001. Since Statistics Canada did not carry out this survey in 1996, the most current information is for the year 1991, which certainly will not be sufficiently current for the year 2001.
- That the sample size of the Health and Activities Limitation Survey be increased such that the data base is of sufficient size to provide meaningful analysis and information pertinent to issues facing persons with disabilities.
- That in future, the Health and Activities Limitation Survey should include questions which would help to identify the reasons and causes for the regional differences in the rate of disability. This information would be vital in developing Health related programs and policies for persons with disabilities.

5. EMPLOYABILITY ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission has been heavily engaged in discussions concerning the planning and implementation of the Employability Assistance for People with disabilities Agreement that has replaced the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Initiative.

5.1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION - EAPD BI-LATERAL AGREEMENT

The Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities was announced in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. The Disabled Persons Commission, in collaboration with the Departments of Community Services, Health and Education and Culture, engaged in a one day consultation process with the disability community

All participants at the annual Legislative Breakfast were invited to attend the consultation along with some representatives of the disability community who did not attend the breakfast. The attendance included representatives from service agencies, advocacy organizations, government departments and persons with disabilities. In all, over 80 individuals participated in the consultation.

Participants were asked to provide direction in several key areas for the implementation of the new agreement. These areas are summarized by the following focus questions that were posed to participants:

1. What do you consider to be the most important principles that would underpin the development and implementation of the EAPD Initiative?
2. What is your understanding of the term "employability" and what would you consider to be the critical components necessary to ensure or achieve "employability" for people with disabilities?
3. What do you consider to be the critical components of community and stakeholder consultation?

A full report of the proceedings is available from the Disabled Persons Commission upon request.

5.2 EAPD INTERIM REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The EAPD Agreement signed by Nova Scotia and the Federal Government requires the participation of the disability community in the design, implementation and evaluation of the new program. Specifically, Section 5.2 of the Bi-Lateral Agreement states:

"The Province will obtain the views of stakeholders in the planning and management of the Programs and Services cost-shared under this Agreement. The intent is to achieve an active partnership among

government agencies and stakeholders."

As well, Annex 2, Section 1.1 of this agreement states:

"The EAPD initiative will emphasize accountability to consumers and the general public... Mechanisms for assessing and evaluating the anticipated and actual results of this initiative would involve persons with disabilities, using either formal structures or advisory groups."

In view of this requirement of the new program and following the community consultation process as described above an Interim Reference Committee was established to work with the Implementation Committee in the development of the new program. This Interim Reference Committee was led by the Disabled Persons Commission during 1998-99.

Membership on the EAPD Interim Reference Committee includes the community representatives on the Commission as well as two representatives of Addiction Services and two representatives of Mental Health Services. Two students with disabilities were named to the Committee and HRDC sits as an Ex-Officio member of the Committee along with members of the Implementation Committee.

The Terms of Reference of this Committee are:

- a) to review and comment on any proposed changes to the programs and services that will be implemented as part of the Multi-year Program and Expenditure Plan.
- b) to provide suggestions for improvement to the design and delivery of programs and services that are funded through EAPD.
- c) to provide advice on the accountability framework, including the identification of evaluation issues and processes.
- d) to make recommendations on an ongoing consultative and/or reference committee mechanism for the EAPD initiative.

The Committee met regularly over the past 12 months and is now considering the latter responsibility and will be making recommendations for on-going community participation in the Autumn of 1999.

6. SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In 1997, the Minister of Community Services requested that the Disabled Persons Commission convene a committee comprised of representatives from Government and the deaf community to develop recommendations and a policy for Government concerning the provision of sign language interpreter services.

Attention to this issue was heightened as a result of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which requires all government service providers to ensure that persons who are deaf and hard of hearing benefit equally from services offered to the general public and to make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services. The Committee developed a Government policy regarding sign language interpreter services which outlines the legal responsibility of the Provincial Government, its departments, boards, agencies and commissions and provides a framework to assist departments with developing departmental policies.

The Commission completed and tabled a final report on Interpreter Services in Nova Scotia in 1998 that resulted in the adoption of a Provincial Policy entitled: *"Sign Language Interpreter Services Policy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians"* that came into effect On January 1, 1999.

A copy of the Report is available from the Disabled Persons Commission office.

Policy Highlights

The Government Sign Language Interpreter Services Policy provides that government will make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services to facilitate effective communication in the provision of government services and that reasonable accommodation will be made up to the point of undue hardship. This is consistent with principles which the Supreme Court of Canada has articulated in earlier Charter cases and serves to simply restate this obligation in the context of a specific purpose, namely, in this instance, the provision of interpreter services. The Policy establishes a one year timeline and accountability framework for the development and implementation of departmental sign language interpreter services policies.

The approved Government Policy is as follows:

INTERPRETER SERVICES POLICY FOR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING NOVA SCOTIANS

I. Policy Statement

The Government of Nova Scotia is committed to ensuring that persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing benefit equally from services offered to the general public and will make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services.

II. Definition

Interpreter services may be provided to persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing through a variety of mediums and these are outlined in (appendices to this policy).

III. Policy Objectives

The purpose of the policy is to ensure reasonable steps are taken to provide services to persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in a fair and non-discriminatory manner through the provision of interpreter services.

IV. Application

This policy applies to all Government Departments, their Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

V. Policy Directives

1. The Government will make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services to ensure effective communication in the delivery of Government services to persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.
2. To ensure effective communication in the delivery of Government services to persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing consideration will be given to factors such as:
 - (a) the complexity and importance of the information to be communicated; and
 - (b) the context in which the communication takes place.

VI. Policy Guidelines

Policy guidelines will be developed by Government Departments to ensure that their Agencies, Boards and Commissions provide services in a fair and non-discriminatory manner by ensuring effective communication in the delivery of government services to persons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing through the provision of interpreter services. Such guidelines will be established within one year of the effective date of this policy.

VII. Accountability

Ministers/Deputy Ministers are responsible for ensuring their respective Government Departments develop policy and procedures which are consistent with the policy and directives contained in the Interpreter Services Policy for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Nova Scotians.

VIII. Monitoring

Departments shall review the Interpreter Services Policy of their Agencies, Boards and Commissions on a periodic basis to ensure compliance with the Interpreter Services Policy for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Nova Scotians.

IX. References

Government of Nova Scotia Affirmative Action Policy

Government of Nova Scotia Fair Hiring Policy

Government of Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

The Disabled Persons Commission would like to thank all those individuals who worked on this initiative.

7. INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

A Provincial Inclusive Transportation Steering Committee was established in follow-up to a report tabled by the Disabled Persons Commission on Inclusive Transportation in Nova Scotia. The Committee includes representation from the Departments of Housing and Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Public Works, Community Services, Health, Education. The Utility and Review Board, and the Disabled Persons Commission.

On April 8, 1997, Priorities and Planning Committee considered and approved a Community Based Alternative Transportation Program (CBTAP) (\$150,000) and an Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP) (\$150,000) for the 1997-98 through 1998-99 period. As well, the Urban Transit Support Program was amended to incorporate funding for accessible urban transit buses. These Programs were developed in response to a report prepared by the Disabled Persons Commission to enhance access to transportation for persons with disabilities.

In April 1998 the Deputy Ministers of Housing and Municipal Affairs, Community Services and Transportation and Public Works gave direction to the Steering Committee to proceed with an Inclusive Transportation Pilot Project. A contract Project Co-ordinator was engaged on February 1st, 1999 and the program was launched early March 1999.

Objectives

The objectives of the pilot Project are:

- to develop/expand inclusive transportation services using existing community resources
- to work with stakeholders in and out of pilot area
- find solutions for sustainable service
- to develop a "model" for inclusive service for use across Nova Scotia
- identify required inputs from all stakeholders to provide service within pilot area
- to implement and test solutions

Site Selection

Expressions of interest were solicited from across Nova Scotia and three Pilot Project sites were selected:

1. Antigonish/Guysborough Region (\$57,000 grant)
2. Colchester Region (\$68,000 grant)
3. Yarmouth Region (\$55,000 grant)

Issues/opportunities

Some of the opportunities that are currently under investigation through these pilot projects include:

- access/deployment of school board vehicles, nursing home vehicles, etc. for general public use.
- transfer non-emergency clients of EHS system into community based transportation.
- umbrella dispatching of all public transportation.
- voucher system subsidy of disadvantaged persons.
- legislative/regulatory opportunities.

The Disabled Persons Commission remains committed to this initiative and continues to work towards access to essential transportation services for all Nova Scotians citizens.

8. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESTRUCTURING

Concurrent with the release of the discussion paper on Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative "Rebuilding the System", the Disabled Persons Commission was asked for specific advice by the Minister of Community Services, the Honourable Francene Cosman, the Minister responsible for the Disabled Persons Commission.

Specifically, the Commission was asked how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities in a restructured social assistance delivery system. The specific issue of whether social assistance/income support services for persons with disabilities should be included in a single piece of legislation or whether there should be a separate legislative framework for these types of services to persons with disabilities.

Following discussion, consultation, and collaboration, the Commission has endorsed the following recommendations as a response:

1. Income Support

It is recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia legislate one program for income assistance for Nova Scotians in financial need. It is further recommended that this new program provide adequate financial assistance to allow individuals and families to live with dignity in the mainstream of our communities.

Eligibility should be based upon financial need, not categorical labelling of disability or designation as "unemployable".

It is also essential that a new social assistance system recognize that some individuals may not be able to support themselves at all, regardless of the interventions or support provided. There must be assurance and flexibility to address the financial and social needs of these individuals.

In addition, the new social assistance system must:

- a) have staff that are well trained and sensitive to the abilities of persons with disabilities and are duly accountable;
- b) have staff that represent the diversity of our society, including persons with disabilities;
- c) fully utilize community assets and resources, particular service agencies that have special knowledge of disability;
- d) be fully engaged in community economic development initiatives;
- e) reward risk taking on the part of recipients and ensure rapid reinstatement if attempts for self-sufficiency are unsuccessful;
- f) support entrepreneurial initiatives; and
- g) have a fair, transparent and arms length appeal process.

2. Support Services

It is recommended that concurrent with the development of a new income assistance program, that a separate legislated program be established to address those necessary additional costs or services that are needed by some citizens, particularly citizens with disabilities. Essential components of this new legislated program are:

- a) an objective, fair and rational process for the determination of eligibility;
- b) eligibility criteria based upon identified need, not categorical labelling of disability or eligibility for income support;
- c) recognition of the additional costs of disability in determining need and eligibility;
- d) recognition of the needs of families who provide care for a family member with a disability;
- e) services provided through direct funding wherever possible, recognizing that this may not be the preference of some consumers;
- f) support services should include, but not be limited to:
 - mobility aids and devices
 - special dietary requirements
 - personal care or attendant services
 - housing costs
 - pharmacare
 - home care services
 - recreation and day programs, including comfort allowance
 - specialized vocational services
 - supported employment
 - transportation
 - technical aids and devices
 - ancillary goods and services
- g) a protocol for inter-departmental co-operation in the funding and delivery of support services;
- h) the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities compliments the employment services and supports provided through a legislated Support Services Program;

- l) ongoing participation of persons with disabilities through participation on an advisory committee with responsibilities that would include monitoring the implementation of this program and the transition to a generic income assistance program; and
- j) a fair, transparent and arms-length appeal process with a provision for the legal costs for appeal.

The Report was presented to Minister Cosman at a meeting of the Commission and a copy of the report is included in this Annual Report in *Appendix A*.

9. ACCESS TO REAL GOVERNMENT PROPERTY

The Department of Transportation and Public Works in partnership with the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission, the Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs, and the Department of Human Resources is developing a policy to address accessibility barriers within government owned and leased properties.

An Accessible Policy Development Committee for Barrier Free Access to Government Owned and Leased Properties has been given the mandate to review current government policy, specifications and practices in regards to Barrier Free Access to government owned and leased office space.

The Committee has the responsibility to develop policy recommendations for the government of Nova Scotia concerning the Province's responsibilities in ensuring appropriate and barrier free access to government owned or leased facilities. These recommendations will be practical and responsive to the access needs of all Nova Scotians, and will reflect the current fiscal capacity of the province.

The Committee is co-chaired by a representative of the Department of Transportation & Public Works and the Disabled Persons Commission.

BACKGROUND

The Disabled Persons Commission has a mandate to advise the province on the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities; the Commission has identified access to provincially owned and leased properties as a concern.

The Disabled Persons Commission, approached the Department of Transportation and Public Works to seek support for a policy that would ensure barrier free access. Senior management of the Department of Transportation and Public Works agreed to work with the Commission in developing an accessibility policy.

An Accessible Policy Development Committee for Barrier Free Access to Government Owned and Leased Properties was formed with representation from Transportation and Public Works, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Human Resources, and the Disabled Persons Commission.

The Accessible Policy Development Committee has met on a number of occasions and has assigned tasks to a sub-committee of its members to review existing barrier free guidelines. This sub-committee has reviewed and compared pertinent guidelines and regulations, including Public Works Canada, Accessibility Evaluation Guide, Public Works Canada, Barrier Free Design Cost Guidelines, the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations and the 1995 National Building Code adopted by the Regulations under the Building Code Act, the Canadian Standards Association CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design standard, Access Canada's Operators Manual, entitled Accommodating Seniors and People with Disabilities, and conducted an informal review of Human Rights case decisions from across Canada as they might apply to minimum acceptable

standards for barrier free access to public buildings.

The full committee has adopted the CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design standard and Section 3.8 of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.

To assist the Committee in its mandate, a consultant who is experienced and knowledgeable in accessibility matters has been commissioned to develop a variety of accessibility related products that will form part of the policy related deliverable.

Current Initiatives

Under the direction of the Committee the consultant is engaging in the following initiatives on behalf of the Committee:

Develop a provincial accessibility evaluation guide based on a standardized checklist format to the standards specified in CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design and Section 3.8 of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations. The Committee however has recommended that the checklist identify four levels of varying degree of accessibility compliance:

Level 1	less than minimal, non-conforming to standards
Level 2	minimal standard, non-conforming to standards
Level 3	essential, conforming to standards
Level 4	desirable, exceeding standards

Developing criteria (assessment considerations) that would assist in the definition and evaluation for each of the four levels of compliance.

Developing procedural guidelines and instructions to assist users of the checklist (a user's manual).

Reviewing an inventory of provincially owned buildings and develop a format for classifying all buildings by their typology that could be used to prioritize the workload of the Committee when undertaking building assessments (classes of buildings to focus on as resources become available).

Developing a training manual that would be used by the Committee to prepare staff that will ultimately be responsible for conducting actual building assessment

Next Steps

Following this development work the Committee is hopeful to engage in a strategic audit of government owned and leased office space and to concurrently draft and propose a corporate policy that would provide for a planned approach to building accessibility for persons with disabilities.

10. "VISITABILITY"

In 1998-99 the Disabled Persons Commission reviewed a new concept in accessible housing - Visitability. a brief overview and background is provided here:

BACKGROUND

The concept of "Visitability" is best explained by the following:

"Those of us with mobility disabilities who complain about housing plans, designs and code standards are just looking for what other people take for granted. We'd just like to be able to visit our friends and our relatives in their homes and if we stay an hour or so and have an extra cup of coffee or something else, we'd like to be able to use their washroom."

So this is where the idea of "Visitability" came from.

In Great Britain the Joseph Rowntree Foundation took up this cause, advocated on behalf of Visitability in housing and were successful in having a law passed through Parliament. As a result, the United Kingdom is the first nation in the world to mandate that every new home that is built will allow basic access for persons with disabilities.

The legislation, proclaimed in Great Britain in March of 1998, requires that every new home must have basic elements of universal design including,

- one level threshold entrance is mandatory in all new homes to ensure access to people with disabilities.
- a downstairs lavatory accessible to the disabled;
- wider internal and external doors and corridors and halls; and
- less steep footpaths and approaches.

Builders were allowed one year to learn proper construction methods before the requirements became mandatory last month in April 1999.

Canada Mortgage and Housing estimates that if Visitability standards were adopted in Canada that the additional cost for newly constructed housing would be \$200.00 per dwelling.

The Commission is preparing the following message to our Coordinating Committee of Ministers:

"For most, it is our biggest lifetime investment and we all hope to remain in and get a lifetime of use from our house. But for growing numbers our housing is failing us because they are not built to accommodate changing needs caused by accident, illness or simply aging."

The Disabled Persons Commission believes that these trends in housing should be recognized by the Province of Nova Scotia and recommends that the Province take appropriate steps to promote solutions to address this housing problem in Nova Scotia through creative and thoughtful solutions such as legislated "Visitability".

11. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

11.1 DEVELOPING AN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY OUTREACH SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL FOR NOVA SCOTIA

BACKGROUND

This study, which was funded by the IWK Grace Children's Charities Fund, was completed by Barbara Welsford, a Commission member and Director of the Lunenburg County Assistive Technology Society and Mary Beth Fleming from the IWK Grace Occupational Therapy Department.

The Disabled Persons Commission reviewed in detail the findings of this study and have approved in principle its findings. A copy of the full report is available, and a brief abstract follows. A series of meetings were held in the winter and spring of 1998 involving a wide variety of significant players from across Nova Scotia working with assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

The group was large and diverse representing private, public and non-profit organizations and/or programs and departments. The meetings were targeted to address assistive technology service delivery gaps that existed across the province.

Meeting participants agreed a potential model must involve collaboration of all sectors of society, be community based, client centred and support individuals with disabilities from birth to death. The proposed provincial model includes a provincial coalition that would be responsible for overseeing and supporting community based technical access teams. The coalition would also oversee accreditation of assistive technology courses, the development of an equipment lending library, process appeals, education of technical access teams, advocate for assistive technology support services and provide awareness initiatives for the province. The coalition would also acquire ongoing funding to support the community based programs. The entire model hinges on a client driven process and open communication between the community teams and provincial body. At the community level the Technical Access Teams include speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, special services educators, teachers, educational consultants, technical support specialists, parents, primary and secondary users of assistive technology and early intervention representatives. The TAT teams are responsible for assessment of the individual for technical access, referrals, program planning, training, technical support, monitoring of use, evaluation and continuous support services for effective implementation into the program plans.

The meeting group also designed an overview of the process for acquiring assistive technology and/or support services in Nova Scotia.

11.2 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

The commission also reviewed and provided recommendations to the Department of Education and Culture regarding assistive technology in the classroom.

BACKGROUND

The Commission commended the Department of Education for its commitment to technology in the classroom. The new technologies can have a significant positive effect upon the learning opportunities and outcomes for students with disabilities.

A key factor, however, that was identified after review by the Commission is the need for adequate adaptive technology (both software and hardware) as well as the necessary professional development in order for the new technologies to be of use to students with disabilities.

Issues

There are many opportunities that can come from the proper integration and utilization of assistive technology:

- a) It can be used by everyone including the resource student, the disabled student, the average student and the gifted student.
- b) It can help level the playing field for the disabled student
- c) It can give remedial help to the resource student
- d) It can be used in modifications
- e) It can help the teacher cope a little easier with the problems within his/her classroom.

The prime example of a program that could have a major impact on assistive technology in the school is the new Information Economy Initiative because it touches the junior & senior high teacher who is very involved in preparing all our students for their future. The disabled student at this time must feel success and strive for their independence so they can be productive members of our society.

Recommendations

Following this review the commission tabled the following recommendations under The Commission's mandate to advise the Province of Nova Scotia on the needs of persons with disabilities:

1. Increase the current allotment (\$150,000) for assistive technology software.
2. Provide the necessary funding for professional development in this area.
3. Through these steps, and with the assistance of key professionals, spread the word on the benefits of adaptive technology for all.

12. OTHER ISSUES AND INITIATIVES

12.1 HEPATITIS C COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Hepatitis C affects the lives of more than an estimated 5,000 people in the Province of Nova Scotia. Currently there is no formal support network, peer counselling, education and awareness or advocacy for persons with hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a degenerative liver disease that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer; it is the number one reason for liver transplants worldwide. Hepatitis C in some cases causes fatigue, nausea, muscle stiffness and other debilitating effects that have a social and economic impact on a person's life. There is no cure for hepatitis C nor is there a vaccine to prevent the spread of this disease. Interferon is one treatment that can cause the disease to go into remission and is successful in approximately 20% of cases. This treatment is expensive and can have various side effects.

Scott Hemming, a board member of the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission obtained hepatitis C through a blood transfusion in 1987 while having his wisdom teeth extracted. Scott has been active in implementing a resource centre for person with hepatitis C in Nova Scotia. In November of 1998 Charlie Macdonald and Scott met with provincial and federal members of Health Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Health. Scott continues to lobby for this community resource in hopes of establishing it within the Queen Elizabeth II Health Science Centre Liver Clinic as one component of a variety of initiatives for persons living with hepatitis C.

In January of 1999 Scott addressed the Commission for a personal perspective and provided insight into the impact that this disease can have on the individual and families of persons living with hepatitis C.

12.2 NOVA SCOTIA NEUROTRAUMA SOCIETY

The Disabled Persons Commission supports the work of the Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society. The Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society was created as a partnership interested in promoting the fields of neurotrauma research, prevention and rehabilitation. A network of provincial neurotrauma funds was promoted by the Rick Hansen Man In Motion Foundation, as part of the tenth year anniversary celebration of the Man In Motion World Tour.

The Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society is made up of representatives of the stakeholder community and key governmental representatives.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health provided \$100,000 in funding for the 1998-99 fiscal year.

During 1998, a total of five grants was awarded to researchers and community organizations to improve the quality of life for persons who have sustained a neurotrauma injury.

A summary of the projects that were funded, what the proposals and objectives were

and what progress has been made to date is provided at Appendix B

12.3 TEAM WORK CO-OPERATIVE LTD.

As reported in the 1997-98 Annual Report, the Disabled Persons Commission played an active role in the establishment of Team Work Co-operative Ltd. In 1998-99 the commitment to the establishment of a full continuum of employment assistance services continued through participation on the Co-operatives Board of Directors and through continued collaboration with partnership committees and community stakeholders.

12.4 PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS AWARENESS - NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Access Awareness Week continues to be supported by the Disabled Persons Commission. IN 1998-99 the Organization underwent a name change to better identify the true nature and mission of the organization.

The mission states:

"Partnership for Access Awareness - Nova Scotia is committed to improving quality of life for all Nova Scotians with Disabilities through the promotion of diversity and inclusion".

In 1998 the Annual Legislative Breakfast was again sponsored by the Organization and the Commission provided administrative support to the organization of this event. The annual Legislative Breakfast is an opportunity for Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly to meet informally with representatives of the disability community. Generally a report and recommendations is prepared in advance by the community and the recommendations are discussed with the Legislators.

A summary of some critical recommendations and the status of these recommendations is provided in Appendix C.

12.5 RESOURCE DIRECTORY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA

In 1998 the Commission published a Resource Directory for Persons with Disabilities in Nova Scotia. The Directory includes information on programs and services provided by the Province of Nova Scotia that may be of benefit to individuals and their families with disabilities.

Copies of the Resource Directory are available from the Commission and may be viewed on the Commission's Web-Site at www.gov.ns.ca

12.6 INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Staff of the Disabled Persons Commission assist individuals with disabilities and the general public to understand and access programs and services that are designed to assist individuals with disabilities. The Commission has a Toll Free telephone 1-800-565-8280.

APPENDIX A

**RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESTRUCTURING
IN
NOVA SCOTIA
October 14, 1998**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concurrent with the release of the discussion paper on Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative "Rebuilding the System", the Disabled Persons Commission was asked for specific advice by the Minister of Community Services, the Honourable Francene Cosman, who is also the Minister responsible for the Disabled Persons Commission.

Specifically, the Commission was asked how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities in a restructured social assistance delivery system. The specific issue of whether social assistance/income support services for persons with disabilities should be included in a single piece of legislation or whether there should be a separate legislative framework for these types of services to persons with disabilities.

Following discussion, consultation, and collaboration, the Commission has endorsed the following recommendations as a response:

1. Income Supports

It is recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia legislate one program for income assistance for Nova Scotians in financial need. It is further recommended that this new program provide adequate financial assistance to allow individuals and families to live with dignity in the mainstream of our communities.

Eligibility should be based upon financial need, not categorical labelling of disability or designation as "unemployable".

It is also essential that a new Social Assistance System recognize that some individuals may not be able to support themselves at all, regardless of the interventions or support provided. There must be assurance and flexibility to address the financial and social needs of these individuals.

In addition, the new Social Assistance System must:

- a) have staff that are well trained and sensitive to the abilities of persons with disabilities and are duly accountable;
- b) have staff that represent the diversity of our society, including persons with disabilities;
- c) fully utilize community assets and resources, particular service agencies that have special knowledge of disability;
- d) be fully engaged in community economic development initiatives;
- e) reward risk taking on the part of recipients and ensure rapid reinstatement if attempts for self-sufficiency are unsuccessful;
- f) support entrepreneurial initiatives; and
- g) have a fair, transparent and arms-length appeal process.

2. Support Services

It is recommended that concurrent with the development of a new income assistance program, that a separate legislated program be established to address those necessary additional costs

or services that are needed by some citizens, particularly citizens with disabilities. Essential components of this new legislated program are:

- a) an objective, fair and rational process for the determination of eligibility;
- b) eligibility criteria based upon identified need, not categorical labelling of disability or eligibility for income support;
- c) recognition of the additional costs of disability in determining need and eligibility;
- d) recognition of the needs of families who provide care for a family member with a disability;
- e) services provided through direct funding wherever possible, recognizing that this may not be the preference of some consumers;
- f) support services should include, but not be limited to:
 - mobility aids and devices
 - special dietary requirements
 - personal care or attendant services
 - housing costs
 - pharmacare
 - home care services
 - recreation and day programs, including comfort allowance
 - specialized vocational services
 - supported employment
 - transportation
 - technical aids and devices
 - ancillary goods and services
- g) a protocol for inter-departmental cooperation in the funding and delivery of support services;
- h) the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities compliments the employment services and supports provided through a legislated Support Services Program;
- i) ongoing participation of persons with disabilities through participation on an advisory committee with responsibilities that would include monitoring the implementation of this program and the transition to a generic income assistance program; and
- j) a fair, transparent and arms-length appeal process with a provision for the legal costs for appeal.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Concurrent with the release of the discussion paper on Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative "Rebuilding the System", the Disabled Persons Commission was asked for specific advice by the Minister of Community Services, the Honourable Francene Cosman, who is also the Minister Responsible for the Disabled Persons Commission.

Specifically, the Commission was asked how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities in a restructured social assistance delivery system. The specific issue of whether social assistance/income support services for persons with disabilities should be included in a single piece of legislation or whether there should be a separate legislative framework for these types of services to persons with disabilities.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The Commission engaged in a collaborative process that commenced with a focus meeting of Commission members. This focus discussion was facilitated by Ms. Anne Martell of Martell Consulting Ltd. Ms. Martell was also the consultant that led focus discussions on behalf of the Department of Community Services during the Fall and Winter of 1997-98. A synopsis of this discussion is provided in Appendix A.

As well, the Commission met with Mr. Peter Barteaux, Project Manager, to discuss Social Assistance Restructuring and to receive a complete update on the work done to date by the Project Management Secretariat.

Concurrent with the Commission's deliberations, a group of interested stakeholders of the Metro Community Partners was invited to participate in discussions around the question posed of the Commission. This group met twice on the subject: once as a focus style meeting (Appendix B) and a second meeting to review a draft position paper that was developed as a result of the Commission's discussions and the focus group work.

2. VISION, PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2.1 COMMISSION'S PRINCIPLES

In conducting its deliberations and in review of public policy issues, the Disabled Persons Commission has identified several key principles that it uses to assess these policies from a disability perspective. These principles are intended to reflect the core values of persons with disabilities and are used to direct the assessment of policies and programs and in discussion of issues such as social Assistance Restructuring, for example. These principles are:

Equal citizenship:

- people with disabilities have equal status as citizens of Canada.
- all citizens of Canada are entitled to the full protection and benefit of the law.

Equality of opportunity:

- proactive and/or affirmative action programs are necessary to ensure equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities.
- barriers, that impose disadvantage, must be removed.

Dignity:

- persons must have the right to make their own decisions about their lives.
- support and assistance to make informed decisions must maximize freedom of choice.
- personal and financial supports must be available to ensure choices exist.
- freedom of choice includes the dignity of risk.

Full inclusion and integration:

- there must be a range of options for living, learning and working in our communities.
- support systems must be in place to enable each individual to reach full potential.

Consumer participation:

- consumers and their families/advocates must have input into relevant policies.
- consultation with consumers is a critical component of all program and service design and evaluation.

The Commission, made up of both representatives of the disability community and representatives of Government Departments that have a key stake in policy and programs for persons with disabilities, has also identified economic sustainability and financial considerations in developing policies and programs as key components of any program or policy review.

Since the definition of these principles, there has been much work done on a national basis to develop a vision and policy framework for programs and services for persons with disabilities.

The Commission has reviewed these works and finds them to be complementary to the Commission's perception of full social and economic participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, the Commission believes that implementation of this vision and policy framework will lead towards an income support system that is more responsive to the needs of citizens with disabilities.

2.2 COMMISSION SUPPORTS A "VISION"

The "Open House" vision as defined in the report Pathways to Integration (Mainstream 1992) and the concept of full citizenship as defined in the report of the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues, has led to the articulation of a "Vision" that underpins a framework for "A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues". The Disabled Persons Commission supports this Vision and finds it complementary to the Principles that the Commission has adopted. The Vision states:

"Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of Canadian Society. The achievement of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize independence and enhance their well being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that limit full participation.

Although the vision does not promote special treatment of persons with disabilities, it does recognize the need for specialized services for persons with disabilities within the generic framework for the delivery of services and supports. The intent is that persons with disabilities will have the same opportunities as other Canadians. The vision also reflects the changing attitudes of society. Most persons with disabilities no longer are seen or see themselves as dependent individuals with no ability to control their lives. They no longer are considered permanently unemployable or unable to contribute to society. These realities must be reflected in legislation, public policy and programs."

2.3 PRINCIPLES FOR A RESTRUCTURED SYSTEM

The Pathways to Integration Report (Mainstream 1992) identified principles that were common to both Government and to consumers (following broad consultation). These common principles are complementary to the vision statement and are as well complementary to the principles of the Commission. These Principles are:

Rights and Responsibilities: People with disabilities have the very same rights, and the same responsibilities, as other Canadians. They are entitled, as others are, to the equal protection and the equal benefit of the law and require measures for achieving equality.

Empowerment: People with disabilities require the means, including disability-related supports, to assume responsibility for their own lives and their own well being. Efforts are required to encourage them to take control, and to support and promote their efforts

in this regard.

Participation: People with disabilities require full access to the social, economic and physical infrastructure of our society so that they can participate fully and equally in their communities.

2.4 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Based upon the Values and Principles defined by the Disabled Persons Commission and the Pathways to Integration Report, and as well based upon the Vision statement provided in the work currently underway between the Federal government, the Territories and Provinces, several strategic directions can be defined that can assist in the development of a restructured social assistance system.

A. Income Support:

Income support programs should provide adequately for the basic and the disability-related needs of all people. The removal of disincentives to employment should be a basic principle of all income support programs and there should be a definite separation of access to disability supports from eligibility for financial assistance.

Eligibility requirements that designate persons with disabilities as "unemployable" provides a powerful and substantive disincentive.

There must be improved coordination between income programs, particularly in the areas of assessment procedures and rehabilitation. As well, a key component of any income support program must be to allow an individual to take risks but to provide a safety net to ensure rapid reinstatement of benefits in cases where the employment or entrepreneurial activity is unsuccessful.

B. Disability Related Supports:

Access to disability related supports is essential for the full participation in community and for the well-being of citizens with disabilities.

A restructured income support program must develop policies and programs that promote greater access to supports and policies that separate access to supports from eligibility for income support.

There must be more consumer control, flexibility and responsiveness in the provision of disability supports and measures which provide greater assistance for disability related costs.

C. Access to "generic" or Mainstream Programs:

A key component to any reform initiative is that services that are available to citizens, should be as available (and accessible) to citizens with disabilities (this would include such programs and services as education, employment and housing).

Key, however, to accessing generic services, is the provision of supports and vocational rehabilitation must be recognized as a significant factor in providing the tools and desire on the part of the persons with a disability to return to work. This vocational rehabilitation must be individualized and based on labour market conditions.

D. Employment Initiatives:

Persons with disabilities who are not currently in the labour force are capable of being employed in some way, given proper supports and removal of barriers. Therefore, employment initiatives should provide specialized support for persons with disabilities and should contain a component of barrier elimination (both attitudinal and physical).

As well, there must be resources provided to increase understanding and application of the concept of accommodation and measures which provide more assistance to offset work-related disability costs. As well, there should be greater support for community economic development and self-employment initiatives for persons with disabilities.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Three basic options were identified during the discussions and collaboration with members of the Disabled Persons Commission and representatives of the Metro Community Partners. These options are described below and include the identified "strengths" and "weaknesses" for each.

3.1 OPTION 1: A SEPARATE LEGISLATED INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A program that would be similar to the "Ontario Disability Support Program" or the Alberta "Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped". Eligibility would include an approved definition of disability. Two definitions of disability considered were:

Ontario Disability Support Program:

A person has a disability if they have a substantial mental or physical impairment that restricts one or more activities of daily living which includes personal care, functioning in the community, and in the workplace and is expected to last at least one year.

Alberta "Assured Income For The Severely Handicapped:

"(An individual) must have a severe disability. The disability must be so severe that it substantially limits (the individual's) ability to earn a living. ("Earning a living" means working full-time at minimum wage.) The disability must be the main factor, not age, lack of education or lack of available jobs. The disability must be permanent and (the individual) may not qualify if treatment for the condition would help the individual to be able to work."

Under this option access to support services (or "special needs") would be determined by eligibility for income assistance.

Strengths:

- special" needs or additional cost of disability can be more readily taken into account
- could provide "best chance" for harmonization with other programs (C.P.P. or W.C.B.)
- removes persons with disabilities from the "welfare" system.

Weaknesses:

- continues labelling of persons with disabilities as "unemployable"
- categorical definition has the potential to "screen out" individuals and certain disabilities
- could result in "creaming" and continued potential for "warehousing" of persons with disabilities
- perceived as a "pension" and special treatment for the disabled

- imposes a disincentive to seek or to attempt employment opportunities for fear of losing benefits permanently.

3.2 OPTION 2: ONE PROGRAM THAT EVERYONE WOULD ACCESS AS DETERMINED BY LEVEL OF NEED.

This would see individual's needing short term assistance, long term assistance, single mothers and anyone requiring income support, accessing income support from the same entry point. Persons are assessed on need for income support. Level of assistance would vary depending upon needs identified in intake and assessment and access to support services for persons with disabilities would be contingent upon eligibility for income support. In this option, support services or "special needs" would be addressed within the new social assistance legislation.

Strengths:

- eligibility based upon need
- eliminates categorization of "worthy" and "unworthy" poor
- allows risk taking by individuals with disabilities to seek employment or entrepreneurial opportunities

Weaknesses:

- does not address the disincentives to employment for persons with disabilities
- creates potential for "creaming" and subsequently warehousing of some persons with disabilities
- persons with severe disabilities and/or degenerative medical conditions may be eligible for less income support
- does not recognize the value of disability specific support programs such as day programs, recreational opportunities, housing needs, etc.
-

3.3 OPTION 3: TWO LEGISLATED (AND SEPARATE) PROGRAMS: AN INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND A SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Two programs:

An Income Assistance program that is based upon financial need. All individuals who require income support would enter through the same system: persons who need short term assistance, long term assistance, single mothers and persons with disabilities. A second legislated program for support services for persons with disabilities. This support program would provide technical aids, attendant services, special dietary requirements, other disability related services. Potentially the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities Program could become a

component of this program. Individuals would enter either through the Income Support Program when disability support services were identified as needed, or directly by someone with a disability who requires support services. Categorical definitions would not be used but a functional assessment that identifies support service needs would be the underlying criteria. Persons who identify support services needs without entering through the Income Support system would undergo some form of financial need analysis that would take into account disability costs in determining a threshold eligibility income.

Strengths:

- eligibility based upon need
- eliminates categorization of "worthy" and "unworthy" poor
- "special" needs or additional cost of disability can be more readily taken into account
- separates income support from support services
- best "fit" with Vision statement and principle of "Full Citizenship"
- facilitates persons with disabilities to take risks through seeking of employment and entrepreneurial activities without penalty
- allows for more portability of services

Weaknesses:

- the needs of persons with severe disabilities and/or degenerative medical conditions must be addressed.

In all cases, it was noted that adequate resourcing is a key component. Each option, without proper resourcing, will fail. Each option, without providing adequate support for basic necessities could create a system that puts persons with disabilities at risk and in a situation where the reformed system is a "lose-lose" situation; both in terms of social cost, a perpetuation of the poverty levels of persons with disabilities and subsequent stress on other programs and services (health care, etc.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INCOME SUPPORT

It is recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia legislate one program for income assistance for Nova Scotians in financial need. It is further recommended that this new program provide adequate financial assistance to allow individuals and families to live with dignity in the mainstream of our communities.

Eligibility should be based upon financial need, not categorical labelling of disability or designation as "unemployable".

It is also essential that a new Social Assistance System recognize that some individuals may not be able to support themselves at all, regardless of the interventions or support provided. There must be assurance and flexibility to address the financial and social needs of these individuals.

In addition, the new Social Assistance System must:

- a) have staff that are well trained and sensitive to the abilities of persons with disabilities and are duly accountable;
- b) have staff that represent the diversity of our society, including persons with disabilities;
- c) fully utilize community assets and resources, particular service agencies that have special knowledge of disability;
- d) be fully engaged in community economic development initiatives;
- e) reward risk taking on the part of recipients and ensure rapid reinstatement if attempts for self-sufficiency are unsuccessful;
- f) support entrepreneurial initiatives; and
- g) have a fair, transparent and arms-length appeal process.

4.2 SUPPORT SERVICES

It is recommended that concurrent with the development of a new income assistance program, that a separate legislated program be established to address those necessary additional costs or services that are needed by some citizens, particularly citizens with disabilities. Essential components of this new legislated program are:

- a) an objective, fair and rational process for the determination of eligibility;
- b) eligibility criteria based upon identified need, not categorical labelling of disability or eligibility for income support;
- c) recognition of the additional costs of disability in determining need and eligibility;
- e) recognition of the needs of families who provide care for a family member with a disability;
- d) services provided through direct funding wherever possible, recognizing that this may not be the preference of some consumers;

- f) support services should include, but not be limited to:
- mobility aids and devices
 - special dietary requirements
 - personal care or attendant services
 - housing costs
 - pharmacare
 - home care services
 - recreation and day programs, including comfort allowance
 - specialized vocational services
 - supported employment
 - transportation
 - technical aids and devices
 - ancillary goods and services
- g) a protocol for inter-departmental cooperation in the funding and delivery of support services;
- h) the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities compliments the employment services and supports provided through a legislated Support Services Program;
- i) ongoing participation of persons with disabilities through participation on an advisory committee with responsibilities that would include monitoring the implementation of this program and the transition to a generic income assistance program; and
- j) a fair, transparent and arms-length appeal process with a provision for the legal costs for appeal.

APPENDIX "A"

DISABLED PERSONS COMMISSION

FOCUS DISCUSSION SUMMARY

At the June 16 meeting of the Disabled Persons Commission a focus group discussion was facilitated by Ms. Anne Martell of Martell Consulting Ltd. The format of the discussion was similar to the Focus Group Initiative that had been facilitated by Ms. Martell during the Fall and Winter of 1997-98.

The following is a brief summary of the discussion as taken from a transcript of these discussions:

A. "PROMOTING FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE"

Should the programs of the Department of Community Services promote the financial independence of clients? Is this the right vision for government to pursue?

Generally Commission members agreed with this vision. However, they indicated there are many things to consider in regards to persons with disabilities:

Support systems

It is critical to recognize the importance of support systems for persons with disabilities in any new system.

Impact of Disability:

A new system must recognize the enormous energy that an individual with a disability must exert to live independently in our community even before they consider an ultimate employment goal.

Cost of Disability:

It is critical to recognize the need for the new system to address the issues of additional cost of disability.

Fear of "Warehousing":

Commission members expressed concern that individuals with severe disabilities would not be given equitable opportunities or support in working towards an employment objective. (Fear of "creaming".)

Staff:

Concern was expressed that the new system must be appropriately staffed in order to ensure timely and sufficient interventions for people with disabilities who are receiving income support.

Family and Informal Support:

Many individuals with disabilities are at an additional disadvantage if there are no informal or family care or support for them. This must be addressed.

Impact Upon Family Unit:

The level of intervention, support services and income support should be related to it's impact on the family unit.

B. "SUPPORTS REQUIRED TO ACCESS EMPLOYMENT"

What are some of the obstacles presently facing clients on social assistance in their efforts to enter the work force?

Loss of Support Services:

The real fear of losing support services is a significant barrier.

Lack of Flexibility:

Individual need should be a driving principle of a new program.

Narrow Definition of Employment:

There many "outcomes" that would be extremely beneficial to an individual that may not fit the current definition of employment.

Support For A Lifetime:

It must be recognized that some individuals may require support for a lifetime.

Training, and Empathy of Staff:

Staff must have a solid background on all disabilities and what they mean to the individual. This is not enough however. Empathic case workers will be essential components of a new program.

Short Term Programs:

Programs and services that are continually changing their philosophies are counterproductive. The Employment Outreach model is a good model, particularly in rural Nova Scotia.

C. "OTHER ISSUES RAISED"

Government Objectives:

Every government decision should be reviewed regarding it's impact upon employment. As well every Government grant should have a requirement for employing disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities.

A Sustainable System:

The system should be sustainable. This sustainability should not however be achieved through mean spirited policies but rather through coordination, inter-departmental cooperation, cooperation with the private sector, community economic development initiatives, etc.

Responsive and Flexible Policies:

There are a lot of policies that could ultimately impact on a person's employability or perception of employability, or could have an impact on promoting or enabling a person towards financial independence. But it all comes down to those policies of accessing attendant care or special need items or technical aids or pharmacare, a wide variety of resources. If it's not a provincial objective, it's a departmental objective.

Responsibility of the Private Sector:

There is some responsibility of the private sector. Government grants and the issuance of contracts should have a requirement for targeting the employment of designated groups.

Early Intervention and Prevention:

This is seen as a key component of making the system sustainable.

Family Responsibility:

This is a key issue for some adults with disabilities. Should the family responsibility for adults with disabilities be different than for other adult children? A government objective such as de-institutionalization should be supported by the new system.

Principles and Values:

In building a new program, it is essential to develop principles and values for the program. For people with disabilities, if it's supporting the individual, if it is viewed as supporting the individual then the decision of that individual may be to live at home with family. So that is fine. That is a decision that they are allowed to make right under the program. It's a payment directly to that individual to purchase board or shelter or whatever from the family, whoever.

Women with Disabilities:

A key issue now is the impact of poverty and disability on women who face significantly more challenges and disadvantages than men with disabilities.

Quality of Life:

The new program should not lose sight that "quality of life" is critical. People with disabilities, such as brain injuries, must have their basic needs met that protects their quality of life.

APPENDIX "B"

FOCUS GROUP SYNOPSIS

BACKGROUND:

A focus group meeting was held at the Disabled Persons Commission boardroom on September 3rd, 1999 with eleven individuals representing a broad cross-section of agencies, both service provider and advocacy.

The participants were provided with the following documentation prior to the meeting:

1. A shortened version of the discussion paper "" with questions.
2. A Canada wide survey of Social Assistance Programs for people with disabilities as prepared by the G. Allan Roeher Institute.
3. A synopsis of the Ontario Disability Support Program
4. An overview of recent important studies regarding policies and programs for people with disabilities taken from the document "In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues".
5. The Executive Summary of the NEEDS Report ("Networking for Effective and Efficient Disability Supports").
6. Principles and Policy Directions taken from a draft of "In Unison" and "Pathways to Integration" (Mainstream 92).

Participants viewed the video presentation *"Disability Policy and Programs: Lessons Learned"*. As well, three Options were tabled for discussion. These Options were:

OPTION 1: A SEPARATE LEGISLATED INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A program that would be similar to the Ontario Program "Ontario Disability Support Program" or the Alberta "Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped". Eligibility would include an approved definition of disability or "handicap".

Ontario: A person has a disability if they have a substantial mental or physical impairment that restricts one or more activities of daily living which includes personal care, functioning in the community, and in the workplace and is expected to last at least one year.

Alberta: "(An individual) must have a severe disability. The disability must be so severe that it substantially limits (the individual's) ability to earn a living. ("Earning a living" means working full-time at minimum wage.) The disability must be the main factor, not age, lack of education or lack of available jobs. The disability must be permanent and (the individual) may not qualify if treatment for the condition would help the individual to be able to work."

OPTION 2: ONE PROGRAM THAT EVERYONE WOULD ACCESS AS DETERMINED BY LEVEL OF NEED.

This would see individual's needing short term assistance, long term assistance, single mothers and anyone requiring income support accessing from the same entry point. Persons are assessed on need for income support. Level of assistance would vary depending upon needs identified in intake and assessment and access to support services for persons with disabilities would be contingent upon eligibility for income support.

OPTION 3: TWO PROGRAMS: AN INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND A LEGISLATED SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

An Income Assistance program that is based upon financial need. All individuals who require income support would enter through the same system: persons who need short term assistance, long term assistance, single mothers and persons with disabilities. A second legislated program for support services for persons with disabilities. This support program would provide technical Aids, attendant services, special dietary requirements, other disability related services. Potentially the EAPD Program could become a component of this program. Individuals would enter either through the Income Support Program when disability support services were identified as needed or directly by someone with a disability who requires support services. Categorical definitions would not be used but a functional assessment that identifies support service needs.

A synopsis of the discussions follow:

A. Expressions of concern:

Representatives wished to discuss concerns that they had regarding the paper as it had been released by the Department of Community Services. A synopsis follows:

- the paper should have more emphasis on persons with disabilities and should have pointed towards solutions instead of asking vague questions. Research should have been done on "what works" and included in discussion paper.
- the community had provided input and research information to the Department and this is not reflected in the discussion paper.
- there was fear expressed that categorization of persons with disabilities means providing the minimum level of support.
- the paper appears to speak to legislation that empowers the state rather than empowering the individual and there was fear expressed that persons with disabilities who are now on assistance will be the losers in a new system.
- concern was expressed that there must be a safe environment to provide input to the process of restructuring and that "restructuring" means "less".
- it was noted that many of the policies and procedures are not complementary: provincial family benefits and EAPD (ie: training allowances provided by EAPD are taken off monthly PFB allotment, thus, lose incentive.)
- concern was expressed that changes are already being implemented at the "office" level and you don't know what these changes are until you have a need.
- significant resources go to policing the system.

- "people must take any job they can get." There is concern that the proposed system is more about a modified form of workfare and there is no mention about fighting the poverty rate.
- "the paper is about cost cutting; not building a new system to provide empowerment and independence to SA Recipients."
- generally people agreed that the generic employment councillor or caseworker does not know the specific needs of people with disabilities. Particularly for people who are severely disabled: knowledge base and expertise is required.
- some thought that Community Services provides services in a paternalistic manner and that decisions on programming and funding are being made by persons without the proper training and knowledge.
- "the paper is not addressing what people with disabilities need, but rather is directed at what the Department of Community Services is willing to provide."

B. Consensus:

There appeared to be general consensus on the following:

- special programs are a recognition of special needs
- persons on assistance generally do not have family or social supports: particularly Social Assistance Recipients who have been on the system for a long time
- individual control of services and self management is key to independence and empowerment
- the philosophical underpinnings of a program are not as key as living with enough resources to live in dignity: (philosophy may have been developed by "elite" disability group.)
- accessing the generic system may water down the services available to persons with disabilities
- the philosophy of Ontario's program is supportable: pwd are not on "welfare"
- some people with disabilities do not want to or are unable to work: but the test of "unemployable" is wrong
- Social Assistance Recipients who have been on long term assistance are most likely persons with some form of disability that has not been diagnosed
- community organizations have expertise in disability that should be utilized
- the "devil will be in the details of a new program"
- the impetus for restructuring had been based, in part, with the view that VRDP would end with CAP

C. A New Program

The consensus continued on the following components of a new program:

- the philosophy of empowerment and independence should be extended to SARS
- more resources are required to allow people to live in dignity
- direct funding is an empowering model
- support services should be separate from income support
- the special needs of persons with disabilities must be recognized
- the additional cost of disability must be considered in a new program
- family cost must be considered: ie. a family who has an individual who requires 24 hour care pays a cost that must be addressed
- community agencies must be fully utilized and supported for this service
- definition of "fair and equitable" is essential
- levelling the playing field for persons with disabilities is essential
- New program must be flexible and responsive to individual needs

D. Future Steps:

Participants wish to continue to participate in this process and a second meeting has been scheduled for October 8 that would continue the discussion.

APPENDIX "C"

Excerpt from

"Summary Report of the Focus Groups Initiative"

Prepared by

Martell Consulting Services Ltd.

for the Department of Community Services

This report summarizes the findings from a series of focus groups on social assistance restructuring in Nova Scotia held in 1997/98. The focus group consultation was designed to capture the views of people who are familiar with Nova Scotia's social assistance system and to obtain their ideas on ways to improve the system.

Following is an excerpt specific to persons with disabilities:

4. SUPPORTS REQUIRED FOR INDIVIDUALS FACING LONG-TERM DISABILITIES

Do you think that government has a responsibility for people who are unable to take care of themselves financially because of mental problems or physical problems?

The central message emerging from the focus groups is that Nova Scotians with disabilities must be provided with sufficient resources to enable them to maintain an enriched quality of life. This includes sufficient finances to cover *"their housing, their electricity bills, their clothing, and most importantly, their food."*

Individuals with disabilities and advocates for the disability community urged that government recognize and support the additional costs and circumstances surrounding an individual's disability and in particular those relating to personal attendant care.

A related message is that sufficient resources be provided to enable individuals with disabilities to live independently and in dignity.

Participants noted that families of people with disabilities also have to be taken into account. In particular, the children of clients with disabilities must be considered. *"We may not be able to remedy the problems that the mom and dad have, but we may be able to intercede to a point where we can help them make their child's life as normal as possible."*

Voices from the disability community also stressed the importance of recognizing the abilities of people with disabilities. There was a call for government to support people in their efforts to work at the level that they are able by providing technical aids, supporting job-sharing concepts, and supporting other enabling initiatives.

As one advocate for people with disabilities put it: *"What we should be promoting is that people will be supported in their efforts to work at the level that they are able."* Another added: *"We (must) recognize that if we look at employment, there is a continuum. It's not all or nothing ... If a person's maximum ability is 20 hours a week then that is great. But we need to be able to know that the supports are there to allow them to do it, so we need that kind of flexibility."*

A clear message was imparted that it is not acceptable for government to give up on the people with disabilities and assume they will be on assistance indefinitely.

APPENDIX B

NOVA SCOTIA NEUROTRAUMA SOCIETY



NOVA SCOTIA NEUROTRAUMA SOCIETY

1998-99 Annual Update

BACKGROUND:

The Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society was created as a partnership interested in promoting the fields of neurotrauma research, prevention and rehabilitation. A network of provincial neurotrauma funds was promoted by the Rick Hansen Man In Motion Foundation, as part of the tenth year anniversary celebration at the end of the Man In Motion World Tour.

The Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society is made up of representatives of the stakeholder community and key governmental representatives. In 1998, the Society included the following individuals:

Laughie Rutt, co-chair	Canadian Paraplegic Association
Alice Dean, co-chair	Brain Injury Association
Charles Macdonald, secretary-treasurer	Disabled Persons Commission
Burke MacCallum	Disabled Persons Commission
Dr. Robert Mahar	Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre
Joanne Marriott-Thorne	Department of Justice
Diane Pottie	Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Association
Dr. Ivar Mendez	Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre
Dr. Gary Allen	Dalhousie University
Dr J.B. Gajewski	Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre

The Nova Scotia Department of Health provided \$100,000 in funding for the 1998-99 fiscal year.

PROJECT REPORTS:

During 1998, a total of five grants was awarded to researchers and community organizations to improve the quality of life for persons who have sustained a neurotrauma injury. The following document will provide a summary of the projects that were funded, what the proposals and objectives were and what progress has been made to date.

RESEARCH:

One of the grants awarded in the field of research went to Dr. Gary Allen of Dalhousie University, for the project titled "Endogenous Responses and Recovery of Motor Function After TBI". The research proposal was to identify what the brain does to repair itself following traumatic brain injury. The emphasis was to localize specific neurochemical changes in the cerebral cortex. Information received from the study, will provide the initial steps towards the development of therapeutic interventions to enhance recovery of neuronal function following

brain injury.

Dr. Allen reports; *"We have had some very exciting findings in our recent experiments. In the past 10 months the project has successfully developed a reliable and reproducibly animal model of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and characterized the temporal and regional neurochemical changes in neurons and neuroglia cells. In accordance with the proposed experiments, the project investigated changes in catecholamines and neuropeptide Y as well as stress proteins (heat shock proteins) and reactive gliosis at various time points following TBI. In addition, the project has introduced a relatively new technique to identify dying or degenerating cells by using Fluoro-Jade fluorescent staining".*

"The balance beam test has proven to be an effective and reliable measure of motor dysfunction in our weight drop model of TBI. More interestingly, we have found that the reactive gliosis and heat shock protein induction appear to indicate local and distant regions of the central nervous system, that may be involved or essential for recovery of motor function. At the same time the Fluoro-Jade fluorescent staining demonstrates wide spread regions of the brain and spinal cord that are affected by a focal TBI."

Dr. Allen continues; *"Recently, we have begun to ask important questions about the effects of mild TBI on motor and cognitive function. I have found that repetitive mild TBI has a conditioning effect on the motor cortex so that a subsequent severe TBI incident has no effect on motor function, whereas animals with severe TBI only have maximal motor deficits. This data has been submitted for presentation at the 1999 Society for Neuroscience Meeting and is almost ready for submission and publication in the Journal of Neuroscience."*

The second research grant went to Dr. Lee Kirby of the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre for the project titled "Wheelchair Anti-Tip Device". The proposed controlled study involved testing the effectiveness of a new technical device that would allow individuals in a wheelchair to better balance themselves on their rear wheels in a safe manner. This research study was used to serve as a practical model for testing new wheelchair designs. In addition, it would assist people who cannot perform this wheelchair function to be more functionally independent by its use. The progress that has been made as of February 1999, reports that the study of the "Wheelchair Anti-Tip Device" was proceeding well. It was stated in the report from Dr. Kirby that the progress would be presented on Research Day at the NSRC on February 19, 1999. Furthermore, a proposal has been submitted to present the details to the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, which is meeting in November 1999, with the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Washington DC.

PREVENTION:

The Nova Scotia Neurotrauma Society awarded one grant in 1998, to aid prevention. It was awarded to the Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Association of NS for their project titled "Bicycle Helmets for Children of Families with Low Income". The focus of this project was on the prevention of Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries through the provision of 500 helmets for children whose families are not in a position to afford the obligatory requirements of the bicycle helmet legislation. The message sent out by SCIPA indicates that obeying the law should not be left to those who can financially afford to do so. Progress made through the delivery of helmets to children totalled \$7,705.00.

REHABILITATION:

The Society also awarded two grants in 1998 in the area of rehabilitation. The grant given to the Canadian Paraplegic Association was titled "Tools to Independence". The proposal of this project was to facilitate the purchase of standardized vocational testing tools for educational and vocational counselling purposes. This would allow persons with Spinal Cord Injuries to establish more realistic vocational alternatives. The progress report from Valerie Pelletier in September 1998, indicated the project objectives were being met through accomplished counsellor training and assessment tool purchases. The remaining 10% of budgeted dollars would complete required materials.

Secondly, the grant given to the Homes For Independent Living was titled "NS Attendant Services Registry Project". The identified proposal for this project was to develop a program which enables persons with disabilities to register via the Internet or phone for their attendant care needs. HIL created a database program which was specifically designed to meet these needs by creating a link between individuals seeking attendants and those attendants seeking work.

The operational progress report on this particular project was recently received in June 1999, from Sandra Strickland. It reports many of the project objectives were largely met and the response from potential users (both consumers and attendants) was less than anticipated. As a result, this had a negative impact on the ability of the project to sustain itself or attract private sponsorship. Only ten persons with disabilities and forty-one potential attendants registered on the system. Due to the continuing lack of both consumer and attendant interest, the project was ended in May 1999, after almost a year. Letters were sent to all registrants and in addition, phone line and e mail accounts were closed.

In conclusion, the project was most appealing but it has been recommended such a project not be reconsidered without a definite indication of support.

FINANCIAL REPORT

1998-99 OPENING BALANCE		50,934.62
REVENUES		
Department of Health		1,000.00
Interest		1,724.12
Total 1998-99 Revenues		101,724.12
EXPENSES		
Grants:	1,269.00	
Research	972.97	
Rehabilitation	770.00	
Total Grants funded:	3,011.97	
COMMUNICATIONS;	1,500.00	
ADMINISTRATION;	417.64	
Total Expenses	4,929.61	
COMMITTED;		
N.S. Rehab Centre	1,535.00	
Homes for Independent Living	1,048.48	
Grant Hold Back		5,595.45
Total Commitments	2,583.48	
Available in 1999-2000		147,729.13

APPENDIX C

STATUS REPORT
PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS AWARENESS
RECOMMENDATIONS

STATUS REPORT - PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS AWARENESS-NOVA SCOTIA

Following is a brief summary of some progress made on recommendations tabled at the Legislative Breakfasts in 1997 and 1998.

1. EMPLOYABILITY ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INITIATIVE

Recommendation

It is recommended that there be truly meaningful consultation with the disability community and those organizations that are providing services to persons with disabilities.

Update

The Disabled Persons Commission facilitated a one day meeting concerning implementation issues and has established an Interim Reference Committee that is working closely with the Implementation Committee of the EAPD Initiative. Membership on this Committee is the community representatives on the Commission and other key stakeholders. The basic Terms of Reference of this Interim Reference Committee are:

- a) review and comment on any proposed changes to the programs and services that will be implemented as part of the Multi-year Program and Expenditure Plan.
- b) provide suggestions for improvement to the design and delivery of programs and services that are funded through EAPD.
- c) provide advice on the accountability framework, including the identification of evaluation issues and processes.

2. SELF-MANAGED ATTENDANT SERVICES

Recommendation

Self management has been a success in Nova Scotia thanks to continued funding from Home Care Nova Scotia, the persistence of MRCIL and above all the cooperation and patience of the self managers, who want others to share the benefits they enjoy. Supporters of independent living in Nova Scotia will continue to press for expansion of this valuable service across the province.

Update

The Minister of Health responded to this at the 1998 Breakfast essentially reiterating Home Care Nova Scotia's commitment to the development of a self managed care component through the Home Care Program. Home Care Nova Scotia will implement a targeted self managed care category which will incorporate participants from the former pilot project and eligible individuals across the Province who are currently receiving services through the In Home Support Program.

Full development of self managed and other categories of care will occur over the next several years in a planned fashion and as resources allow.

3. RESPITE CARE

Recommendation

Family members seek a commitment from our government to work in partnership with families in the development and implementation of community support programs. It is essential for programs to be developed which will address the need for respite and in home supports in a flexible, comprehensive and reliable manner.

Update

Families who have members with cognitive or physical handicaps continue to identify respite as their priority need. The Department of Community Services assists with respite funding through two In-Home Support Programs.

- I) Financial Assistance for respite care for families who are caring for children with disabilities, developmental or physical, at home, and,
- II) Funding special needs or direct care provided by family members, non-family caregivers or agency caregivers to adults with a disability and to seniors.

The In-Home Support Program for children provides funds for respite as well as for other extraordinary expenses which families incur, e.g., personal care supplies, transportation to medical appointments, special equipment, etc. This program has experienced dramatic growth in the last seven years because of the closure of institutions and the increasing numbers of children with disabilities who are being cared for at home. The Program currently has a budget in excess of \$3,000,000 shared by approximately 750 families.

The need to provide respite care support for caregivers is a clear priority and Community Services is implementing plans to expand respite care options and services for families throughout the province. A request for proposals was widely circulated and the Department has awarded contracts to the successful agencies in each of the regions. We are establishing respite care programs in each region of the province, in recognition of the specialized supports families with children with disabilities require. Four respite programs in each region will receive grants of \$60,000. each.

Once fully up and running, these new services will help the Department of Community Services coordinate respite services in partnership with families, other government departments and agencies, and with the many recreational and community groups who have a role in supporting this population.

4. DISINCENTIVES TO EMPLOYMENT

Recommendations

- a. The system must ensure that people who access employment do not end up with fewer dollars than when they were on assistance.
- b. There needs to be changes and a different mind set within the social security system that encourages people to contribute to their own well being and to the economy of the

country.

- c. We need to find ways to support people who are employed in low paying jobs because of disabilities. For example, income assistance should continue beyond the present levels and be reduced on a sliding scale. Also, people should have continued access to a drug card depending on their need.
- d. Guidelines need to be clearer so that people who are considering entering the labour market understand all the details.
- e. Rapid reinstatement policies must be in place to protect individuals against unsuccessful attempts to enter the labour market; the process should encourage people to make an attempt to become employed.
- f. The provincial government needs to negotiate with HRDC to make CPP less of an obstruction to individuals considering employment options.

Update

The Minister of Community Services has released the discussion paper *Rebuilding the System* as part of the Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative. As well, the Minister has asked the advice of the Disabled Persons Commission on this question. Specifically, the Commission was asked how best to address the needs of persons with disabilities in a restructured social assistance delivery system. The specific issue of whether social assistance/income support services for persons with disabilities should be included in a single piece of legislation or whether there should be a separate legislative framework for these types of services to persons with disabilities.

The Commission, through consultation and discussion, has provided a response to the Minister for consideration.

Recently, the Minister of Community Services released a Progress Report on the Social Assistance Restructuring Initiative in which a report of progress to date and a synopsis of consultation is provided with a commitment to further collaboration with community. Specifically:

- A Policy Reference Group representing the community, consumers, and advocacy organizations will be formed and asked to provide input on key policy areas.
- The Department will lead an interdepartmental working committee reflecting a more collaborative, integrated approach to policy design. The key stakeholders, namely the Departments of Health, Education, Justice, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Finance, and Economic Development and Tourism will be invited to participate. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), representing federal interests and expertise, will be also asked to participate.

As well, the Province of Nova Scotia, in partnership with all other Canadian Provinces (with the exception of Quebec), the Territories and the Federal Government, signed an accord entitled *Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* which provides a policy framework that responds to this recommendation by the community; specifically recommending that income supports and support services be separate programs.

Nova Scotia, along with other Provinces and Territories, have made commitments to ensure rapid reinstatement of participants to income support if work efforts fail. This represents a broad recognition that efforts to enter or re-enter the labour force need to be supported.

5. ACCESS TO POLLING STATIONS:

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Nova Scotia Elections Act be modified to require that all polling stations be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- It is recommended that all political parties, in future elections, consider the needs of individuals with communication disabilities in accessing information on their party platforms (ie. sign language interpretation, closed captioning, braille or other alternate format).
- It is further recommended that all constituency offices be accessible to all citizens.

Update

The Chair of the Disabled Persons Commission has written each member of the Legislative Assembly encouraging them to locate their constituency offices in accessible premises. As well the Commission has had communication with the Acting Chief Electoral Officer raising the concerns of the disability community.

In the Fall session of the Nova Scotia Legislature amendments were put forth through Bill 85 that would have addressed the concerns of the community. The Bill received 1st reading prior to the dissolution of the House.

6. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICES:

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia adopt a standard policy requiring a minimum level of access to government buildings, both for the purpose of employment and accessing government services.

Update

An Accessible Policy Development Committee for Barrier Free Access to Government Owned and Leased Properties was formed with representation from Transportation and Public Works, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Human Resources, and the Disabled Persons Commission.

The Accessible Policy Development Committee has met on a number of occasions and has assigned tasks to a sub-committee of its members to review existing barrier free guidelines. This sub-committee has reviewed and compared pertinent guidelines and regulations, including Public Works Canada, Accessibility Evaluation Guide (Public Works Canada), Barrier Free Design Cost Guidelines, the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations and the 1995 National Building Code adopted by the Regulations under the Building Code Act, the Canadian Standards Association

CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design standard, Access Canada's Operators' Manual, entitled Accommodating Seniors and People with Disabilities, and conducted an informal review of human rights case decisions from across Canada as they might apply to minimum acceptable standards for barrier free access to public buildings.

The full committee has adopted as a minimum standard the CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design standard and Section 3.8 of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.

To assist the Committee in its mandate, a consultant who is experienced and knowledgeable in accessibility matters has been commissioned to develop a variety of accessibility related products that will form part of the policy related deliverable.

Current Initiatives

Under the direction of the Committee the Consultant is engaging in the following initiatives on behalf of the Committee:

- Developing a Provincial Accessibility Evaluation Guide based on a standardized checklist format to the standards specified in CAN/CSA-B651-95 Barrier Free Design and Section 3.8 of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations. The Committee however has recommended that the checklist identify 4 levels of varying degree of accessibility compliance:
 - Level 1 less than minimal, non conforming to standards
 - Level 2 minimal standard, non conforming to standards
 - Level 3 essential, conforming to standards
 - Level 4 desirable, exceeding standards
- Developing criteria (assessment considerations) that would assist in the definition and evaluation for each of the four levels of compliance.
- Developing procedural guidelines and instructions to assist users of the checklist (a users manual).
- Reviewing an inventory of provincially owned buildings and develop a format for classifying all buildings by their typology that could be used to prioritize the workload of the Committee when undertaking building assessments (classes of buildings to focus on as resources become available).
- Developing a Training Manual that would be used by the Committee to prepare staff that will ultimately be responsible for conducting actual building assessments.

Next Steps

Following this development work the Committee is hopeful to engage in a strategic audit of Government owned and leased office space and to concurrently draft and propose a corporate policy that would provide for a planned approach to building accessibility for persons with disabilities.

7. ACCESS TO DRUGS, THERAPIES AND EQUIPMENT

Recommendation

The 1997 Legislative Breakfast Committee recommended that persons with multiple sclerosis be given access to new Interferon drug therapies such as Betaseron.

Update

The Minister of Finance, in the 1998-99 Provincial budget, announced the Department of Health would be providing approximately \$1 million for the initial funding for interferon drugs, such as Betaseron, for people with remitting and relapsing multiple sclerosis. It's recognized that additional resources will be needed in future years as new therapies become available.

8. SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Recommendation

The 1997 Legislative Breakfast Committee recommended the province set up a province-wide infrastructure (both policy and funding) allowing any Deaf Nova Scotian to use provincial qualified interpreters in any medical, legal, employment and recreational setting.

Update

On September 24, 1998, the Executive council approved a Sign Language Interpreter Services for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, which came into effect on January 1, 1999. This policy was developed by the Disabled Persons Commission in consultation with the deaf community, sign language interpreters and several government departments. Plans are now underway to implement this policy.

Policy Highlights

The Government Sign Language Interpreter Services Policy provides that Government will make reasonable accommodation for the provision of interpreter services to facilitate effective communication in the provision of government services and that reasonable accommodation will be made up to the point of undue hardship. This is consistent with principles which the Supreme Court of Canada has articulated in earlier Charter cases and serves to simply restate this obligation in the context of a specific purpose, namely, in this instance, the provision of interpreter services. The Policy establishes a one year time-line and accountability framework for the development and implementation of departmental sign language interpreter services policies.

9. ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Recommendation

There is a wide range of housing alternatives available that involve partnerships with private, public and non-profit organizations. We recommend that the Department of Housing and Municipalities begin to provide information sessions and how to workshops to non-profit

organizations representing persons with disabilities. The spin off from this educational approach would be an informed disability community which could begin to initiate housing projects, i.e. housing co-operatives, partnerships with private contractors, etc.

Update

The Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs has continued to provide assistance for housing adaptations which may be required for persons with disabilities. During the last fiscal year the Department approved 62 loans under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Disabled Program for a total of \$425,999. Information about this assistance is available from any of the regional housing offices.

The province's public housing apartments include accessible units which are located in communities throughout the province. Information about this housing is available from the seven housing authorities.

- II. Construction of accessible housing, accessible rental units etc. could be stimulated by tax

incentives to contractors. Some of this is taking place now but a more aggressive tax rebate program would accelerate building in this area.

Update

Taxation and tax incentive programs at the provincial level are the responsibility of the Nova Scotia Department of Finance. In the past, the Federal government has also been involved in tax related programs to encourage residential discussion.

Although the Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs would be interested in any tax programs that would affect residential development, the Department of Finance is responsible for introducing any new provincial tax programs.

- III. Seniors groups which constitute a sizable lobby should be affiliated with disability groups in order to lobby contractors to provide more accessible housing. The Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs could initiate this dialogue between the Seniors Secretariat for example and the Disabled Persons Commission.

Update:

The Disabled Persons Commission participated in a focus group meeting with the Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs and brought these concerns forward. As well the commission is investigating the concept of legislated "visitability" that has become the law in Great Britain.

The United Kingdom is the first nation in the world to mandate that every new home built will allow basic access for persons with disabilities. In Britain every new home must have basic elements of universal design including,

- one level threshold entrance is mandatory in all new homes to ensure access to people with disabilities;
- a downstairs lavatory accessible to the disabled;
- wider internal and external doors and corridors and halls; and

- less steep footpaths and approaches.

The Commission will be presenting this concept to the Coordinating Committee of Ministers which includes the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

The Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs has not been approached by any interested organization to take a role in the development of an expanded lobby group to encourage contractors to develop more accessible housing.

The Department would be pleased to facilitate a meeting among interested organizations and the residential construction industry.